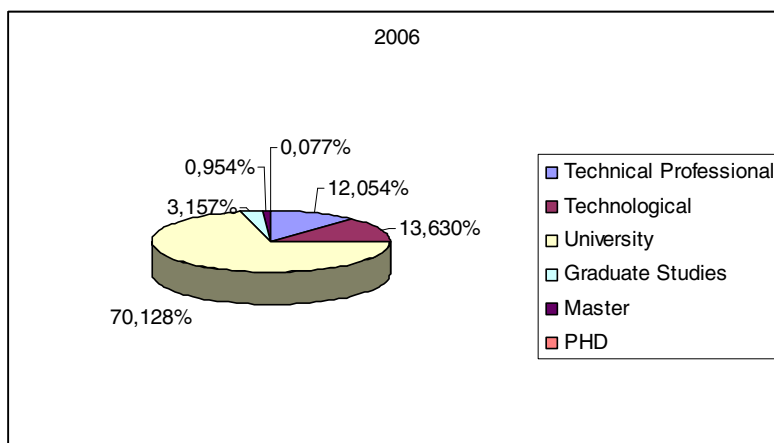


I. SUMMARY

According to the national population census conducted in 2005, Colombia has approximately 42 million inhabitants, the third largest population in Latin America after Mexico and Brazil. The census also revealed that 3.3 million Colombians live in foreign countries. It was also confirmed that 78 percent of the population live in urban centers, 48.6 percent of Colombians are men and 51.4 percent are women. Literacy rate is considered one of the highest in Latin America (91.4 percent of the population over fifteen years old is literate).

During 2006, approximately 11 million students enrolled in basic elementary and secondary education (high school). Eighty eight percent of the Colombian population has received basic education (five years of primary school). According to the Ministry of Education, 8.4 million students attended public schools while 2.6 million went to private schools. A report published by the Colombian Ministry of Education in 2006 revealed that 1.304.326 students were enrolled in higher education programs. Seventy percent of these students were attending college/university programs, 25.7 percent were enrolled in technical professional and technological careers, 3.2 percent were taking graduate studies, and only 1.0 percent was pursuing Master or PHD degrees.



Under government-to-government or private agreements, both public and private universities in Colombia have developed programs with universities in the United States, Europe and Latin America. Priority is given to projects that foster post-graduate programs for training professors as well as research to enhance teaching.

The number of Colombian students looking for graduate programs abroad is increasing every year. The United States continues to be the most popular destination particularly for graduate and ESL programs, although Canada, Australia, Spain and England have begun to gain popularity. Some local universities also have exchange programs with foreign universities, which give students the opportunity to study abroad for one year or more.

Colombian executives know that nowadays they must have a graduate degree to enhance their competitiveness in the labor market, especially within the multinational corporations or government entities. Graduate programs most on demand by Colombian students are those focused on business administration, management, finance, banking, marketing, and engineering.

According to entities that promote U.S. educational institutions in Colombia, most local students interested in studying in the United States, prefer to enroll in universities located around the East Coast (Florida, Washington D.C., New York State, and Massachusetts). This is perhaps due to factors such as geographical proximity, relatives and the large number of Colombians that live in this area. There is however a good number of Colombian students that study or have studied in universities located in California and Texas and some of them have held important positions in areas such as management and the oil industry.

Although the United States leads the international student recruitment market, it is important to emphasize that other countries are investing the promotion of their higher education, situation which calls for a continuous active promotion and marketing of the U.S. educational institutions market.

II. MARKET OVERVIEW

During the last four years, the Colombian economy has shown a sustained growth that can be attributed to an increase in domestic security, the policy of keeping inflation low and maintaining a stable currency (the Colombian peso), petroleum price increases, and an increase in exports to neighboring countries and the United States as a result of trade liberalization. Most economic indicators were positive during 2005 and 2006. The inflation for 2006 was 4.5 percent.

The peso has continually revaluated vis-à-vis the U.S. dollar during the last four years. At the end of 2002 the official exchange rate was \$2,864.79 pesos per dollar. During 2003-2006, the exchange rate showed a continuous downward trend, with significant ups and downs, reaching \$2,238 pesos per dollar by the end of 2006. The sharp devaluation of the dollar is having a positive effect in lowering the cost of studying abroad.

With approximately 41.3 million inhabitants, Colombia has the third largest population in Latin America after Brazil and Mexico. It is estimated that 75 percent of the population live in the urban centers and the remaining 25 percent live in the rural areas. Of the total population in Colombia 48.6 percent are men and 51.4 percent are women. The literacy rate is high as 91.4 percent of the population over fifteen years old is literate.

According to the last report published by the Colombian Ministry of Education in 2006, 36.6 percent of the Colombian population had completed primary education, 32.6 percent finished the high school or equivalent technical education level, 7.5 percent had a college degree, and only 1.4 percent had obtained a Masters or PHD degree.

III. MARKET TRENDS

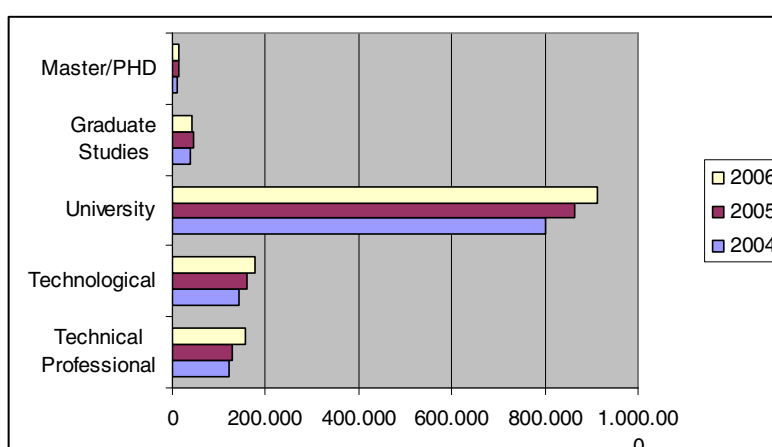
The education system in Colombia is basically divided into five levels: two years of Pre-School, five years of primary school ("Primaria"), six years of high school ("Secundaria o Bachillerato"), three years for some medium-level technical careers, and an average five years of University education (bachelor level degrees).

In 2006, there were 276 institutions providing medium level technical and higher education programs as shown in the following table.

Type of Institution	OFFICIAL	PRIVATE	TOTAL
Technical/ Professional	11	40	51
Technological	17	43	60
Universities	53	112	165
TOTAL	81	195	276

As shown below, the number of students enrolled in higher education institutions increased by 17.0 percent from 2004 to 2006 and the estimated growth for 2007 is 6.6 to 7.0 percent.

Level of Education	2004	2005	2006	% (2006)
Technical Professional	120.494	128.003	156.905	12.05
Technological	142.879	161.247	177.430	13.63
University	799.808	865.228	912.872	70.13
Graduate Studies	39.893	44.423	41.094	3.16
Master	9.975	12.188	12.422	0.95
PHD	675	949	1.006	0.08
Total	1,113,724	1.212.037	1.301.729	100.0



According to local recruiting agents, a segment of the market that is gaining interest among Colombian students is the high schools. If they can afford to do some Colombian parents try to send their children to the U.S. for the last two years of high school. The goal is to provide the students with a good level of English to enable them to enroll directly in a college or university. Due to the low cost, the public U.S. schools are the most attractive.

The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Colombia reported that 7,706 Colombian student visas were issued during Calendar Year 2006. These numbers include both F-1 student visas and J-1 exchange visitor visas.

According to the Institute for International Education, Colombian ranks 14th in the number of students in the United States with 6,835 students in 2006.

IV. COMPETITION

In Colombia, most private institutions offering high school, graduate and under-graduate programs have an excellent academic level. During the last two years (2005/2006) the number of Colombian students enrolled in higher education institutes increased by 7.4 percent, from 1,212,937 to 1,301,728 of which an estimated 48.5 attended public universities and 51.5% went to private universities. Colombian universities offer approximately 300 graduate programs, most of them within the engineering. A Masters Degree Program can cost (tuition only) between US \$6,000 and US \$12,000 (for two-years). The most popular graduate programs are business administration, finance, biological sciences, economic sciences and law.

For a Colombian student or professional, the United States remains the first choice when considering study abroad, but they have the perception that it is more difficult for them to obtain a student visa to enter the United States, even though today the visa, if approved, is delivered to the applicant within the following five working days after the interview.

During the last few years, educational institutions from other countries (U.K., Australia, Canada, France, Spain) have been conducting promotional campaigns. U.S. universities also receive significant competition from universities in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile and other Spanish speaking countries.

Colombia benefits from international cooperation as the result of different cultural agreements with several foreign governments, multilateral organization and universities, which offer full or partial scholarships to attend undergraduate, graduate, technical, and short-term courses overseas. Most of these scholarships are awarded through the Colombian Institute for Educational Loans and Technical Studies Abroad (ICETEX). This organization is dedicated to financing higher education through loans to start or continue their higher education either in the country or abroad. The international scholarship program is a particular type of non-refundable financial aid intended to cover, in part or in full, educational expenses abroad. In reciprocity to foreign aid offered, ICETEX also established the program of scholarships for foreign citizens in Colombia.

V. END USERS

Parents with medium-to-high level incomes prefer to send their children to local private bilingual schools. There are thirteen international private schools with International Baccalaureate - IB programs in Colombia. Eight are located in Bogota, D.C, two in Barranquilla, two in Cali, and one in Medellin. Most of these schools have ESL programs. Students graduating from these schools may enroll directly in foreign universities.

There is another group of high schools that have intensive or completely bilingual educational programs and that are targets for any U.S. post-secondary/under graduate educational institution wishing to enroll Colombian students. Students graduating from these schools are already fluent in English, have a first hand knowledge of the U.S. educational system and tend to continue their formal education in the United States, especially at the graduate level.

As already mentioned there are approximately 276 institutions that offer technological, undergraduate and graduate programs in Colombia. A very low percentage of students attending these institutions have the economic resources to pay for an education in a foreign country.

Promotions efforts should then be directed to a selective group of universities attended by the middle and higher socioeconomic levels.

Although, over the last three years, the number of English language teaching institutes has increased throughout the country, a growing number of students prefer to travel to the U.S. to enroll in intensive English programs. An upper level of English (written and oral) is mandatory to fulfill job requirements in multinational companies, certain government entities, and even in important local firms. To graduate, most private universities require an intermediate proficiency in English Language.

VI. MARKET ACCESS

The following are some points to be considered by U.S. educational institutions interested in keeping prospective Colombian students aware of U.S. educational services:

- Appoint a firm or individual as a local recruiting representative or agent that can promote throughout Colombia. Since the investment is significant, Colombian parents tend to be cautious when they plan on sending their children to study abroad. This is why it is very important that they can have an interview either with a local recruiting agent or a school representative. This agent would also be responsible for direct marketing including personal visits to local schools and universities; provide information on admission requirements, tuition and living expenses, and assessment on language skills required.
- Participate in “Expo Estudiante” an annual event that takes place in the four major Colombian cities. See Part IX (Upcoming Trade Shows).
- Maintain a well designed and updated web site for interested prospective students. Internet has gained importance especially among young people who will search on the web for information, especially admission requirements.
- Run advertisements and special reports in major local newspapers (specially in weekend inserts) and education magazines.
- Distribute brochures and pamphlets in Spanish and English for Expat community, through the student counseling offices of the “Centro Colombo Americano” (Binational Centers) and the Foundation for Scholarly Exchange (Fulbright Commission) in charge of most of the U.S. scholarship programs. The bi-national centers are located in the largest Colombian cities and their services include promoting education in the U.S., English language teaching, and a public library.
- Create partnerships or joint degree programs with Colombian universities that are looking to establish contacts with foreign schools.

It is worth mentioning that COLFUTURO and ICETEX are two Colombian institutions which provide scholarships to facilitate the access of Colombian professionals/students to further education abroad.

COLFUTURO is a non-profit organization that provides funds to Colombian professionals/students to study abroad. Their loan program is available to students who have been accepted in graduate, master or PHD program in highly reputable foreign universities. During 2005, COLFUTURO awarded 121 scholarships: 101 for Master programs and 20 for PHDs. COLFUTURO has agreements with many reputable universities such as: Columbia, Harvard, MIT, Georgetown, New York University, University of Texas, Cornell, University of London, Stanford, Oxford, John Hopkins, Cambridge etc. For contact information see Part VII of this report.

COLOMBIAN INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL LOANS AND TECHNICAL STUDIES ABROAD –
ICETEX (described in Part IV)

VII. KEY CONTACTS

Following is a list of key contacts related to the Colombian educational sector:

FUNDACION PARA EL FUTURO DE COLOMBIA - COLFUTURO

(Foundation for the Future of Colombia)

Jerónimo Castro-Jaramillo, Director

Alexandra Moreno, Academic Advisor

Carrera 15 No. 37-15

Tel: (571) 340-5394/ -5398

Fax: (571) 287-2630

E-mail: jeronimo.castro@calipso.com.co

rosamaria.salazar@colfuturo.com.co

Web: www.colfuturo.org

CENTRO COLOMBO AMERICANO BOGOTA

(Binational Center)

Nancy de Cortés, Director

Calle 19 # 2-49

Tel: (571) 344-3880/334-7640/342-1758/243-3738

Fax: (571) 282-3372, 334-7642

E-mail: ncortes@colombobogota.edu.co

Web: www.colombobogota.edu.co

INSTITUTO COLOMBIANO DE CREDITO EDUCATIVO Y ESTUDIOS TECNICOS EN EL EXTERIOR - ICETEX

(Colombian Institute of Educational Loans and Technical Studies Abroad)

Marta-Lucia Villegas-Botero, General Director

Carrera 3a No. 18-32

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Tel: (571) 334-4515

Fax: (571) 599-6323

E-mail: relaciones_interna@icetex.gov.co

www.icetex.gov.co

INSTITUTO COLOMBIANO PARA EL FOMENTO DE LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR -ICFES

(Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education)

Daniel Bogoya, Executive Director

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(Ministry of Education)

Gabriel Burgos, Vice Minister of Superior Education
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FULBRIGHT COMMISSION
Ann Mason, Executive Director
Calle 38 No. 13-37, Piso 11
Bogota, D.C. – Colombia
Tel: (571) 287-7831/232-4326
Fax: (571) 287-3529
E-mail: amason@fulbright.edu.co
<http://www.fulbright.edu.co>

UNION DE COLEGIOS INTERNACIONALES –UNCOLI
(Association of International Schools)
E-mail: juntadirectiva@uncoli.edu.co
<http://www.uncoli.edu.co>
Bogota, D.C. - Colombia

VIII. UPCOMING TRADE SHOWS

Several related events are organized by local and international organizations during the year. An event worth mentioning is “Expo-Estudiante”. Colombian and foreign colleges and universities participate in this show. Next year the event will take place in Bogota from September 29 through October 3, 2008.

For additional information on how to participate in this event, interested institutions should contact:

EXPO ESTUDIANTE 2008
Philippe Person, Director for Colombia
Bogota, D.C. - Colombia
Avenida Jimenez No. 4-46
Tels: (571) 282-7580 / (571) 282-8998
Fax: (571) 283-1840
E-mail: expoestudiante@aviatur.com.co

The U.S. Commercial Service in Bogota also offers a number of services specially designed to benefit U.S. schools with good academic level, but unknown in Colombia. Services include, Single School Promotion, Trade Missions, Gold Key Service (allows U.S. firm to have a schedule of appointments with potential agents, educational institutions and students prior to arrival). For detailed information on these services please visit our web site: www.buyusa.gov/colombia/en

For More Information

The U.S. Commercial Service in Bogotá, D.C. – Colombia can be contacted via e-mail at: Rebeca.Rueda@mail.doc.gov; Phone: 011 571 383-2703; Fax: 011 571 315-2171; or visit our website: www.BuyUSA.com

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